

FACT SHEET

SEPTEMBER 30, 2009

**INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT****Beck's Lake/LaSalle Park**www.idem.IN.gov

Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr.
Governor

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Commissioner

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Description:

- Beginning October 6, 2009, staff from the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) will be working to collect soil samples from residential properties in the area of LaSalle Park in South Bend. Samples will also be obtained from LaSalle Park.
- Historical documentation indicates that Beck's Lake Landfill, located at LaSalle Park, operated during the 1930s-1950s, and received waste before these disposal practices were regulated.
- The Indiana Brownfields Program previously conducted an environmental assessment that revealed levels of arsenic contamination in surface soils at LaSalle Park and on vacant properties adjacent to the park. In response to that investigation, IDEM's Site Investigations Program took additional samples from residential properties within several blocks of LaSalle Park that confirmed these elevated levels. These levels are within the range of naturally-occurring arsenic levels in some areas of Indiana, but are believed to be elevated compared to other nearby locations in South Bend that were found to be generally lower.
- The purpose of IDEM's current investigation is to determine the scope of the elevated arsenic in residential soils and whether the source of this contaminant is related to the activities that occurred at Beck's Lake/LaSalle Park during the 1930s-1950s.

Environmental Impacts:

- Arsenic is a naturally-occurring metal that has been historically used in many industrial products and processes, including wood preserving and pesticides. If concentrated in high enough levels, arsenic can be toxic to humans and their surrounding environment.
- Exposure to arsenic can occur in many ways, but in the case of historic dumping, exposure would likely occur by contact with soils that have been contaminated with the metal. This includes eating food, drinking water or breathing dust that has been exposed to a contaminated area.
- Human exposure to unnaturally high levels of arsenic can cause throat and lung irritation, skin abnormalities and, in extreme cases, cancer and death. The accompanying fact sheet from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) explains arsenic and its dangers in more detail.

IDEM's Role:

- IDEM's Site Investigation Program works to assess potential environmental hazards and prioritize contaminated sites for further needed actions.
- Once the sample results have been evaluated, IDEM's Site Investigations Program staff and management will make a decision regarding future actions.
- IDEM's Site Investigations Program staff will be available to help answer questions and address concerns of homeowners.

Citizen's Role:

- IDEM will ask homeowners in the area of the study to allow its Site Investigations Program staff access to their yards to collect soil samples. The sample will consist of a small amount of soil that will be screened on site and possibly sent to a laboratory for confirmation of its contents. The amount of soil will be negligible and will leave little to no noticeable trace of IDEM's sampling activity after staff leave.

More Information:

- For information about the sampling event being performed by IDEM, contact Tim Johnson with IDEM's Site Investigations Program at (317) 232-3220, toll free at (800) 451-6027, ext. 2-3220, or via e-mail at tjohnson@idem.IN.gov.
- For health-related information, contact Mark Johnson, regional representative with the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) at (800) 621-8431, ext. 3-3436; LaNetta Alexander, director of the Environmental Epidemiology Division at the Indiana State Department of Health, at (317) 351-7190 or laalexand@isdh.IN.gov; or, John Lankowicz of the Saint Joseph County Health Department at (574) 245-6711.
- For information about IDEM's Site Investigations Program, visit www.idem.IN.gov/4143.htm.
- For fact sheets and information about arsenic, visit the Indiana State Department of Health Web site at www.IN.gov/isdh/18887.htm or the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's (ATSDR's) "ToxFAQs" Web site at www.atsdr.cdc.gov/tfacts2.html.
- Media may contact Amy Hartsock, public information officer with IDEM's Office of Media and Communications Services, at (317) 233-4927, toll free at (800) 451-6027, ext. 3-4927, or by e-mail at ahartsoc@idem.IN.gov.